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THE FINE ARTS AS A DYNAMIC FACTOR IN SOCIETY

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Before beginning my subject proper I must explain the term "dynamic" as used in my title. It is borrowed from Professor Ward's *Dynamic Sociology*, and is used in the same sense as it is used in physics, namely as denoting force, a propelling agent. The thesis of this paper is based upon the theory that the feelings, emotions, and passions of mankind constitute the propelling agent or dynamic element in society, corresponding to the physical forces in the lower realms of nature, and that they can be controlled and guided into beneficial channels by intelligent foresight, just as the physical forces (wind, water, fire, electricity, etc.) are being so controlled and guided by the inventions of men. My second point is that in the fine arts, including drama and fiction, this dynamic element finds its most perfect expression, and could, if thoroughly understood, be made use of by, and become a powerful aid to, the sociologist.

The paper was inspired by the belief that this is not generally recognized by the sociologists, but that they, on the contrary, consider the fine arts as entirely outside of their domain, as belonging to a side of human mind with which they, as sociologists, have nothing to do—viz., the aesthetic faculty, which derives pleasure from the contemplation of beauty and harmony, but has no part in the improvement of society, indeed turns away with impatience and pain from the disharmonies and stupidities of life to dwell in an ideal realm, where beauty and happiness reign. "There is nothing dynamical in the influence of the fine arts," says Mr. Ward in *Dynamic Sociology*.

Enjoyable in themselves, and therefore sources of happiness, their influence is confined to the immediate present, and is incapable of contributing any permanent aid to social progress. Their study belongs entirely to the department of social statics, and this brief notice is merely intended to fix their true position and exhibit their negative character.

In *Pure Sociology* he says:

It has been said that art is nonprogressive; that it serves no useful purpose in the world; that it does not raise the moral tone of society; that it adds no new truth to man's stock of knowledge; that it makes man no more comfortable, no better, no wiser. This might almost be true without constituting an argument against the cultivation of the aesthetic faculty. Love of the beautiful and its pursuits do not claim to constitute either an ontogenetic or a philogenetic force in society. They constitute a typical sociogenetic force. Art is a socializing agency. It is an agency of civilization as distinguished from preservation or perpetuation. It is not a necessity; shall we call it a luxury? It is much more. In a pain-economy it may be a luxury, but above that it becomes a utility. It finally becomes a spiritual necessity. As soon as the class of wants which may be distinguished as needs are satisfied, this spiritual want, which, as we have seen, is planted deep in the animal nature, at once asserts itself; and the satisfaction of a spiritual want is as important as that of a material want. It serves to swell the volume of life. Men have aesthetic interests as well as economic interests, and their claims are as legitimate.

While thus fully recognizing the fine arts as civilizing agencies, he yet considers their influence restricted to one class of wants, the aesthetic desires of mankind, and holds that they neither have nor desire to have any share in the improvement of society, except in so far as they add to the volume of life. As to the origin of the aesthetic faculty, it is to be found far back in animal and plant life, where it arose as an aid to the reproductive forces; pleasing forms, colors, sounds, and perfumes in plant and animal being produced in response to a desire to please and attract the other sex. *It originated as a means to a very important end—an end without the accomplishment of which the race or species would have perished.* But in the human race it gradually became an end in itself. The aesthetic faculty or appreciation of beauty having been firmly established, its satisfaction finally became the only end. "It actually creates desire in order to satisfy it," says Mr. Ward. Now, this attitude toward art fully explains the comparative indifference of the sociologist and of all who have to deal with social phenomena. If the aim and object of art is merely to please and gratify an aesthetic sense which has nothing to do with the problems and difficulties of life, then art lies outside the domain of the sociologist. But

is this true? Have the greatest artists of the world been satisfied merely to please and entertain men? It is true probably of the art of primitive peoples, and of a great and important branch of art today. We might call it the idealistic as compared with the realistic art. Not that I consider this a perfectly correct terminology; for the idealistic art should also be realistic or true to nature, and the realistic art is often far more idealistic than the other; yet it will do for our present purpose. This idealistic art, which indeed is an end in itself, is by many of the profession as well as the laity still regarded as the only proper and legitimate art, and its end, the desire for beauty and harmony, the only legitimate end, finding expression in the motto: "Art for art's sake." Some, indeed, claim that this is the highest and noblest aim art can have; namely, to soothe and delight the tired mind, to make man forget the worries and troubles of life, to create for him an ideal of harmony and happiness, and bring him nearer that heaven of fable which man has ever dreamt about, but has never reached, and which art alone can make him at least fancy for a moment to have entered. But what shall we say of that other art, generally called "realistic," which has had some of the, if not *the*, greatest geniuses of the world as its exponents? What shall we say of the art of Tolstoy, Ibsen, Hauptmann, Sudermann, Bernard Shaw, Zola, Flaubert? What of the paintings of Veretchagin, Sleevogt, Uhde; the sculptures of Meunier, Rodin, Sinding; or the music of Wagner, Berlioz, Grieg, or Glazounoff? I know that some critics maintain this to be no art at all, but vagaries of disturbed minds or the gloomy pessimism of unsuccessful men. But this is the shallowest of criticisms. The fact is that the greatest artists of all time have not merely wished to please; they have more often shocked us. Their object has been to be *true*, and by this very truth to arouse men; to awaken their intellect; to stir their emotions, to bring a sluggish and lethargic mankind to a realization of the wrongs, the injustice, the cruelty, and the indifference that reign in society.

Let us look at a country which, more than any other of the civilized countries of the world, is suffering immeasurable wrongs under the indifference, greed, cruelty, and stupidity of its so-

called upper classes, and let us see if its art can be called a luxury; if in it we do not rather hear all the passionate longing, the infinite horror, the dull pain and misery, on the one hand, and, on the other, the revolutionary frenzy, the imperious call for justice, the ever-renewed appeal to the intelligence of the people to right their wrongs. I speak of Russia. I wish I could have brought with me an orchestra to play for you the wildest compositions of Tschaikowski, Rachmanikoff, Glazounoff, and you would not think that music merely wants to please. In music all the emotions of a people—its longings, aspirations, passions, all the wants and desires that cannot or dare not find expression in words—are expressed; but also its joys, its triumphs, its happiness and delight. If, as Mr. Ward says, “we must admit the right of feeling, or, if you please, of passion, to rule the world,” then this dynamic factor, these surging emotions, as yet inarticulate and with no intelligence to guide them, find expression in music, are, as it were, brought to the consciousness of people, are reinforced in the passionate strains of harmonic art.

Says Tolstoy:

What is music? What does music accomplish? And why does it accomplish what it does accomplish? One is told music elevates the soul. Nonsense. A lie, a villainous lie! Yes, it has an effect—I speak of myself; it has a mighty effect, but not a soul-elevating one. Its effect is neither elevating nor lowering. Its effect is directly upon the soul; in other words, it is a psychical exciter. How can I explain this more clearly? Music compels me to forget my true position. It exiles me from my proper one, forces me into a strange one; in fact, under the impression which music has upon me, I feel what I really do not feel. I understand what I really do not understand. I do what I really cannot do. The way I explain this to myself is as follows: Music is like yawning, and acts like yawning or laughter. I am not sleepy, but I yawn when I see others yawn. I have no reason to laugh, still I laugh when I hear others laugh. Music transports me into the psycho of the composer, and upon my mind is made the same impression as was created upon the author's. Our souls come together, and I allow him to carry me along from one tendency to another. Why I do that I do not know. He who writes music knows why he is in that particular aptitude. It can be attributed to certain actions; therefore the tendency has an importance for him, but not for me. Therefore music is not only exciting and stimulating, but it leads to conclusions. A military march, for example: the soldiers march to it, and the music leads to a conclusion. The dance, I dance:

the music leads to a conclusion. The mass at church—I speak of the holy sacrament—the music led to a conclusion.

This is exactly to the point. Music stirs the emotions, and the emotions must find vent in action; whether that action is for good or evil is a question. Nobody would claim, I suppose, that the flood of cheap music that is inundating America has an elevating influence on the people. Neither can music that cannot be understood. In interpreting music that stands for ideas, some explanation of these ideas should be given. Some attempt at least should be made at intelligent control, and the flood of emotions, aroused or set free, be prevented at least from running into dangerous channels.

But music is only one of the arts. Let us look at painting. Having taken Russia for illustration, we will take one of the most famous Russian painters, Veretchagin, whose pictures aroused a storm of protest, of indignation, of enthusiasm, of wildest feeling, all over Europe and even in America. He was accused of attacking religion, morality, patriotism—all the virtues upon which the welfare of a nation is supposed to rest.

A good deal has been written about my works [he says]; many were the reproaches brought against my paintings, those treating of religious subjects as well as those treating of military. It was a very well-known Prussian general who advised Emperor Alexander II to have all my military paintings burned as objects of a most pernicious kind. There were still more inimical commentaries on those of my pictures which treat of religious subjects. And yet they were all of them painted without any preconceived idea—were painted only because their subject interested me. The moral in each case appeared afterward, coming up of its own account, from the very *truthfulness of impressions*.

And this moral was an effective one. Never perhaps have the horrors of war been brought home to the people more convincingly than in his paintings. Says a London paper, the *Christian*, of December 2, 1887:

These paintings are the work of a Russian, Veretchagin—a painter equal to any of his contemporaries in artistic ability, and beyond any painter who ever lived in the grandeur of his moral aims and the application of his lessons to the consciences of all who take the least pains to understand him. He who misses seeing these paintings will miss the best opportunity he will

ever have of understanding the age in which he lives; for if ever the nineteenth century has had a prophet, it is the Russian painter Veretchagin.

But Veretchagin claims even more for his art than the mere arousing of people's conscience. He claims that it can help to solve the social problems, to save the people from destruction.

Suppose [he says] the day comes when the priests will entirely lose their hold upon the people, when the soldiers will turn their guns muzzle down—where will society look for bulwarks then? Is it possible that it has no more reliable defense? Certainly it has such a defense; and it is nothing else but talents and their representatives in science, literature, and art in all its ramifications. Art must and will defend society. Its influence on the minds, the hearts, and the actions of the people is enormous, unsurpassed, unrivaled. Art must and will defend society, with all the more care and earnestness because its devotees know that the "regulators" [by whom, I suppose, he means the socialists, whom he judges not quite fairly] are not disposed to give them the honorable, respectable position they occupy now—since, according to them, a good pair of boots is more useful than a good picture, a novel, a statue. Those people declare that talent is luxury, that talent is aristocratic, and that consequently talent has to be brought down from its pedestal to the common level—a principle to which we shall never submit.

We must admit that there is truth in these statements, and that, if we consider art as merely a gratification of the aesthetic sense, we cannot even blame the socialists for wishing to dethrone it, especially if we are still living in what has been called by sociologists a pain-economy—i. e., a condition of things where, for the majority of people, the pains and miseries of life outweigh its satisfactions. And such a country Russia no doubt still is. But, as I am trying to show, its art is not a luxury. Veretchagin's prediction has in a great measure come true. Art has done more perhaps than any other single influence to arouse the Russians from their torpor, to show them the depth of their misery; but also to reveal to them the cause of this condition of affairs, to awaken them to a sense of the necessity of action and of the great labors of reconstruction before them.

But it was mostly art in its highest manifestation, the drama. Says a writer for the *Cosmopolitan* for April of last year:

In no country are the favorites of the stage more acclaimed and more beloved than in Russia. The audiences of Paris, Berlin, or even Vienna

seem stolid and apathetic beside those of the chief Slavic cities. Though a large and concentrated student body is partially responsible for this condition, the rank and file of playgoers are singularly impressionable and enthusiastic. Ovations, such as among us take place only on the rarest occasions, are of frequent occurrence in the theaters of Russia. Hence it is natural that the social and political as well as the purely artistic influence of the theater should be particularly important throughout the empire. Though officialism and bureaucracy have for years been paramount in czardom, it is refreshing to realize that the stage in Russia is in the hands of no clique or caste. Managers, actors, and singers alike are recruited from every walk of life. A princess is the lessee and star of one of the leading theaters of St. Petersburg, and an ex-manufacturer and merchant of Moscow is Russia's foremost producer and stage director. Yet it must not be taken for granted that the personal vogue of an opera-singer, however great, or the enthusiastic scenes enacted in crowded concert-hall, are the most important achievements of the contemporary Russian stage. The real social significance of the theater in Russia is best exemplified and can best be studied in a series of remarkable plays produced, for the most part, during the past half-dozen years in Moscow, and performed with unprecedented success on every available stage in the empire. It is obvious to any student of Russian affairs that the drama is today relatively accomplishing what the novel did during the fifties and sixties. We have Gorky's own words to the effect that fiction has largely ceased to be a vital form, and it only remains to add that the play is proving its logical successor. Within the decade a new race of prophets has sprung up, *using the actor as their mouthpiece and the stage as their battleground*. While the pages of Turgenev, Dostoevski, and Tolstoy will always palpitate with pity, will always evoke a haunting, troubled beauty, their specific task has been fulfilled; the serfs have been freed, and though the reconstruction was not consummated, it was at least fearlessly outlined. Today it is no longer these issues, but the struggle for a constitution, the extension of suffrage, common humanity to the Jews, and the obliteration of autocracy, that have burned themselves into popular consciousness. About certain of these themes have been written, with more or less explicit intent, dramas depicting in relentless accents existing social conditions. Regarding, as we comfortably do, the theater as a place of diversion, as a convenient escape from business or from boredom, it is difficult for us to comprehend the vital influence on the Russian public of such productions as Chekow's *Sea Gull*, Gorky's *At the Bottom*, Naidyenow's *Vanyushin's Children*, or Chirikow's *Chosen People*. It should, however, be remembered that the average Russian takes art seriously. He preaches no such insipid cant as "art for art's sake." His best novels and his best plays are dedicated to a broader, deeper passion than the mere craving for aesthetic stimulus; and not until most of the country's wrongs are righted, or her bleeding wounds healed, will fiction or the drama settle down to a trivial dilettantism.

Such, then, seems to be the mission of art in a country where the people are struggling with titanic effort to bring about a better condition of things. And it seems almost as if such conditions were necessary to bring out the real sublimity and power of art. It seems as if, as soon as a nation has attained a certain prosperity and apparent content, its art declines. We hear Richard Wagner fifty years ago raise his voice in infinite scorn about the condition of art in Europe. He contrasts it with the art of the ancient Greeks.

With the Greeks [he says] the perfect work of art, the drama, was the abstract and epitome of all that was expressible in the Grecian nature. It was the nation itself—in intimate connection with its own history—that stood mirrored in its art work, that communed with itself, and, within the span of a few hours, feasted its eyes with its own noblest essence. All division of this enjoyment, all scattering of the forces concentrated on one point, all diversion of the elements into separate channels, must needs have been as hurtful to this unique and noble art work as the like-formed state itself. . . . Such a tragedy day was a feast of the god; for here the god spoke clearly and intelligibly forth, and the poet as his high-priest stood real and embodied in his art work, led the measures of the dance, raised the voices to a choir, and in ringing words proclaimed the utterances of godlike wisdom. . . . But what is art as it now fills the civilized world! Its true essence is industry, its ethical aim the gaining of gold, its aesthetic purpose the entertainment of those whose time hangs heavily on their hands. . . . Its pleasure it has set up in the theater, as did the art of Greece in its maturity. And, indeed, it has a claim upon the theater; for is it not the expression of our current views of present life? Our modern stage materializes the ruling spirit of our social life and publishes its daily record in a way that no other branch of art can hope to rival; for it prepares its feasts night in night out in almost every town of Europe. Thus, as the broad strewn art of drama, it denotes to all appearances the flower of our culture, just as the Grecian tragedy denoted the culminating point of the Grecian spirit; but ours is the efflorescence of corruption, of a hollow, soulless, and unnatural condition of human affairs and human relations.

This is sharp and bitter criticism, but I believe it was justified at the time Wagner wrote, and I almost think—I say it hesitatingly, but I feel it deeply—it is true to some extent of America today. Are not the conditions here somewhat as Wagner describes them? Are not almost all the theaters in the land in the hands of a corporation, a syndicate that openly avows that

the theater is a place of amusement, of entertainment, and not of education or elevation, and whose only aim is the gaining of profits?

There are even some of our most popular artists [Wagner goes on] who do not in the least conceal the fact that they have no other ambition than to satisfy this shallow audience. They are wise in their generation, for when the millionaire leaves a heavy dinner, the banker a fatiguing financial operation, the workingman a weary day of toil, and go to the theater, they ask for rest, distraction, and amusement, and are in no mood for renewed effort and fresh expenditure of force. This argument is so convincing that we can only reply by saying: It would be more decorous to employ for this purpose any other thing in the wide world, but not the body and soul of art. We shall then be told, however, that, if we do not employ art in this manner, it must perish from out our public life; i. e., that the artist will lose the means of living. On this side everything is lamentable, indeed, but candid, genuine, honest—civilized corruption and modern Christian dulness.

Does not this fit our case? The artist must live. Perhaps he would rather play noble, elevating plays, but the public does not want them. "What will you?" says the syndicate. "We have put great plays on the stage, we have employed the best artists, but they play to empty houses; the people do not want them, the American public is not educated up to the finest productions of artistic genius; they require cheap melodrama and sentimental trash." We have here, it seems, the same vicious circle that sociologists complain of in the social problems. Some say: "It is no use trying to change conditions, if human nature remains the same; it is human nature that must be changed before your proposed change in conditions will do any good." The others maintain that it is environment which makes character; that man, like the rest of nature, is the result of causes, and that, if you change the causes and conditions that make man, his character will change as a logical result. So between the two factions we do not make any progress. The same seems to be true of art. Unless we give to the people what they want, the artist cannot live; and unless he lives and prospers, he cannot create great works. I do not propose to solve the problem; I merely maintain that it is a problem for the sociologist to consider; that

there is a chance for sociologist and artist to co-operate; that the social and the artistic problems are one.

So long [says Wagner] as—with the prevailing character of public life, and the necessity it lays upon the theatrical director to deal with the public in the manner of a clever commercial speculator—we look upon a theatrical institution as a mere means for the circulation of money and the production of interest upon capital, it is only logical that we should hand over its direction—i. e., its exploitation—to those who are well skilled in such transactions; for a really artistic management, and just such a one as should fulfil the original purpose of the theater, would be but poorly fitted to carry out the modern aim. For this reason it must be clear to all that, if the theater is at all to answer to its natural lofty mission, it must be completely freed from the necessity of industrial speculation. Since already the service of the state, the military service, is no longer an industrial pursuit, let us begin with the enfranchisement of public art, for, as I have pointed out above, it is to it that we must assign an unspeakable lofty mission, an immeasurably weighty influence on our present social upheaval. More and better than a decrepit religion to which the spirit of public intercourse gives the lie direct; more effectually and impressively than an incapable statesmanship which has long since lost its compass, shall the ever-youthful art, renewing its freshness from its own well-springs and the noblest spirit of the time, give to the passionate stream of social tumult—now dashing against rugged precipices, now lost in shallow swamps—a fair and lofty goal, the goal of noble manhood. Is it your *real* object, *ye honorable* statesmen, confronted with a dreaded social overthrow, to graft upon this mighty change a strong and living pledge of future nobler customs? Then lend us all your strength to give back art unto itself and to its lofty mission.

DISCUSSION

GEORGE WILLIS COOKE, WAKEFIELD, MASS.

In ten minutes one must give conclusions and not reasons for those conclusions; therefore he must speak more or less dogmatically; and I shall for that reason confine myself to one or two phases of the subject which has been presented to us.

Art does not begin in sensual selection and in none of its forms whatever has it in that way been created. Art is the result of the plain instinct—of the demand for expression, because the whole nervous organization of man requires some safe utterance which shall be harmonious and symmetric. The aesthetic sense originated, undoubtedly, in the same direction from the same cause, not because of sensual selection. The art impulse is essentially a social impulse. All the great art of the world in the various art forms has been of the nature of social expression or social interpretation, or can be really understood only from the point of view of social interpretation. If you study the primitive clan,

you discover the people of that clan beginning with the dance. And in order that there shall be harmony of step, they associate the voice in song, repeating at first only syllables and gradually from that going forward to the expression of communal emotions. This enlarges into point and into music. And these are the primary arts—the arts especially of social creation: and if one starts from this point of view and follows art to the present time, he will find that in all phases of society, from the clan to the international social life of today, art has found its expression, not in individual genius, but in the social demand of the people whose life it manifests. And social changes have brought about changes in art creation. I think if one puts aside the established convictions in regard to art—what might be called the art prejudice—and looks at the subject openly and with broad mind, he will discover that all art in all forms has been essentially a social creation. It has grown out of those common emotions and convictions of a people which have demanded some form of expression that would appeal to the whole associative life of the people; and the result of such study, it seems to me, might lead one to believe—and in this I know that I entirely contradict the conventional prejudice in regard to art—that no form of art has ever been essentially the result of individual genius but of social demands for associative expressions; and what leads me—what justifies me in this conclusion—is that all forms of art which have become universal—every art creation that has appealed to the universal life of mankind, has underlying it some great social emotional conviction of a people that has grown up and shaped itself through succeeding generations until it has become the social possession and the social interpretation of a people. And then, after it has essentially established itself in a people's life, it is taken up by him whom we call Homer, or by Dante, or by Shakespeare, or by Goethe. Now I ask you to consider that every great world-wide art, without exception, has voiced not Dante, not Homer, not Shakespeare, not Goethe, but, growing by succeeding changes, change upon change of social conviction, of social interpretation, until it became a mythological conviction, a conception of life, the idealizing of life, the shaping of life into the form of the mother and the child, and then the artist with a brush or with a pen is able to voice what the people have come to believe, what essentially the people have created. That is the basis of all art that is world-wide in its results and its convictions, and I believe that no great art can ever possibly be created under any other forms than dogmas.

Now the reason why the Russian people have a great art as contrasted with the American people is not that they are in a revolutionary stage, but that they are still essentially in a second stage—in a communal stage—where there is a consciousness of the life of the people, and the artist voices that life of the people. Now in America we have no great art because we have a great commerce—because we have a great individualistic form; and the building-up of democracy throws down all possibility of art; not because democracy is essentially opposed to art, but because the artist sets out with the conviction which is in the mind of every artist in America today, that he has to voice his own emotions—that what he speaks for isn't the life of his time, isn't the life that has been created through succeeding generations of conflict—but he aims to voice his own notions—his own emotions.

Now look at the poetry of America today: artistical in its capacity for elaborating the art-form in poetry, it exceeds any poetry that the world has ever known, and yet how completely abortive is American poetry, because all these little poetlings are not speaking for America, they are not speaking for any American condition, they are not speaking for any high conditions of American life that have been developing through successive ages; they are only speaking for themselves. And so long as we have in America no social consciousness of American life, there can be no art-form that will be dynamic.

PROFESSOR LESTER F. WARD, BROWN UNIVERSITY

I hold in my hand a letter from Professor Poland which I will read to the society, and I am sure you will all regret its contents along with myself. (Reads letter.)

I am especially sorry that Professor Poland could not discuss the paper, because he would have done so, of course, from the point of view of the professional artist. What his views would have been I am not fully informed, although I had some conversation with him on the subject, and I am quite sure that his ideas were at least sympathetic. Certainly they would have been enlightening.

While I am on my feet, if I may be permitted—not at all as a substitute for Professor Poland, but more growing out of the presentation of the paper by Mrs. Unger, as I have now heard it—even after having read it, new thoughts have come to my mind, and I might in a moment or two, perhaps, make a suggestion which would be something of a contribution, not claiming any right to speak on this subject at all in the general discussion.

I must, of course, speak entirely from the sociological view-point, and the main thought that has occurred to me and one upon which I have been reflecting considerably of late is this: I want to say before beginning, though, that I bow to the withering criticism of Mrs. Unger upon the passages of my works which she has read to you, and that I am not going to attempt to defend them. On the other hand I am going to see whether I, even, cannot say a little something on her side of the matter.

It is a somewhat general sociological principle that I am going to try to present to you in a word; and I might formulate it in these words: that in almost all the operations of mankind, the institutions of mankind and the activities of mankind, we find a law to exist, if we study and trace any of them back far enough—a law or principle which may be expressed in these words: that whereas most of these things began as ends there has been a universal tendency for them to be converted into means. A number of examples occur to me even now, without much reflection. If we take architecture, for I am going to pass over a great many others that might be looked upon from the same point of view to illustrate the fact; but passing to architecture, it is obvious to anyone who has traveled at all about this world that architecture primarily was a fine art and it has become a useful art only by the process that I have been speaking about—the general tendency of that which started as an end to become a means. And if you travel in certain countries now: you need not go off of this continent on which you live—travel through the country of Mexico as I have myself, and you

will see them prominently standing forth—the only great, beautiful architectural buildings in any of the Mexican towns that I have ever visited are the churches, gilded and adorned and furnished with all the attributes of fine pieces of architecture. The human habitations are awful; and the contrast is striking to anyone from America—from the United States or from the North. But without elaborating that which all of you can see much more of than anything I have said, let us make a great leap and consider another art—the art of literature. In the eighteenth century, I might go back and repeat what is well known to all scholars, that poetry preceded prose and was accompanied with music and the dance—as Mr. Cooke has said, *terpsichorean*—but passing over even those earlier phases where even the laws were written not in rhyme but in poetry, we come down to modern literature. Take the literature of the eighteenth century. In the eighteenth century, especially in France, literature was a fine art—it was nothing else. It was an end. It was largely so in other countries; and as the center or the van of civilization advanced, the epoch in which literature was an end simply moved its position from one country to another. What is literature today? It is scarcely anything more than a means, and the only object in the world of fine writing is to express ideas. We admire the writings of a Huxley simply because they constitute a vehicle by means of which he was able to express the greatest thoughts of the age; and so with every other great literary man today. He is of no particular importance from a literary point of view except as he is more capable of expressing ideas and carrying thought from mind to mind than other men are. Need I carry it any farther? Need I refer to the other arts—for example, to painting? We speak of the declining arts—especially of sculpture. Doubtless they are declining, and my implication is simply in so far as they fail to become means and insist upon being ends in themselves there is no demand for them. But there is demand for an artist like Millet, who can paint an “*Angelus*” or a “*Man with the Hoe*,” because those paintings carry ideas—not all intellectual ideas, but mental ideas. And any great art today, whether it be painting, sculpture, or any other kind of art, that can carry emotions or carry elevating influences through society will be in demand; and that kind of art will be capable of subsisting, of surviving; all other kinds will fail under the law of the survival of the fittest. I was trying to think if there was another; and certainly there is, as Mrs. Unger has said. I cannot speak of music. She can. But I can speak of the drama, because everybody knows what that is; and of fiction, because everybody knows what the influence of that is. In speaking of fiction I am almost going back to what I said about literature, but it is the great modern renaissance as it is called—the great realistic drama and realistic fiction; and the great works, if there are any today; and the great works of nearly the last century—certainly the last half-century—have all been great, or recognized as such, simply because they are what Mrs. Unger has called *dynamic*. And what do we recognize as having value in any great work of fiction or in any great drama unless it is some social power to influence, and not only to influence but to benefit mankind?

Viewed in this light then, which is certainly a true light, it is obvious that the fine arts not only may become, but in a great degree have already become, a dynamic factor in society.

DR. FRANKLIN H. SARGENT, PRESIDENT AMERICAN SOCIETY OF DRAMATIC ART,
NEW YORK

I hope you will take the letter read a moment ago as though it had been written by myself, because I am exactly in that gentleman's state physically. I am here only in the spirit. I could not keep away, because the subject was too interesting, too important, too suggestive. Important because it is a subject which is so ignored by scientific minds, and it is the one subject which seems to demand scientific men's investigation more than any other that I know of. Those subjects drift about—of the fine arts—without helm and without captains, and insurrection, as they call it, of impulse and conviction and sentiment takes possession in place of pure logic; and I am sure that if I were an artist, I should have the right to speak for the artists in asking those minds—like yours, ladies and gentlemen—that are needed to investigate this particular subject.

I confess that at the outset I am rather perplexed and troubled that the state of degradation which I am told the art of this country is in has not been proved by anything that has been said today. We have had statements; we have had a very fine, beautiful, and learned exposition of the Russian and German state of affairs; but I have heard nothing which has proved to my mind that the art of this country is in such an awful state. I wish to have that proved before I attempt to speak of it. Visit an exhibition such as I did the other day, in New York, and go across the water and visit the great technical schools in France, and you will find here more ideas, more significance in painting, and, in some cases, better technique than you will there. I may be going beyond my province as an observer, but I simply wish to sound my voice in opposition to that statement. I can only stand up boldly in defense of the drama. I might say for the drama, if the fine arts are in that awful state that you speak of, it is the fault of the country in which that art exists. I mean to say that the theater and drama are merely a mirror of the life which exists, and if you have anything to say against them at all, you are also speaking against the life which it reflects. Until you sociologists can form plans by which the life of this country ceases to be barbaric and uncivilized; until you can get past this terrible wail of money, graft, and the like, of which the air is full, you will find the plays will treat of the things which will entertain and interest people, because people are in a very floating state of mind—not able, in the hurry and scurry of the life in this country, to settle down and have the comfort and luxury of looking upon plays as instruction, and they continue to go to the plays for amusement, and will continue to as long as the country is as young as it is.

I felt an anxiety that was not fulfilled. I have felt and desired that we should find some fundamental thing—something that we could stand upon. Now I am upon a foothold and know where I belong in this matter. For instance, in regard to the drama. As I listened I jotted down a few headings. I felt that in the theater the audience, aside from being phonographs and cameras, that receive impressions from the plate and from the actors that go into their minds and their souls, and that become permanent with them—not so much, perhaps, but to some extent like the experiences we have in real life—aside from that, I said to myself, it seems to me that the audience are like children at play, they are like bystanders; their enthusiasm, their listening and applause as the play goes on,

show that they are taking part. In short, it shows that it is a higher kindergarten. People have tried to find the place where the kindergarten could be carried up onto a higher plane. It seems to me we have that in the theater. It has the same valuation. It isn't a thing to be ignored, as most speakers on the subject of the so-called fine arts attempt to do, or a thing to be patronized; but, being a mirror of ourselves and of the lives we live, it is a thing to be studied and thought about; and that is what the scientific minds have not done. They have looked upon it as a mere side issue, hardly worth the trouble; treated as a child which either has to be confined in the room and not allowed to go out at all, put in the corner perhaps, as in the new college curriculum; or, if allowed to go out and play, allowed to do what they like as long as they are not too noisy and do not interfere with their elders, which is the idea of the theater as it is viewed by many scientific minds.

Now, there is a very interesting point, I believe, with regard to the educative effect of the theater, and it is the educative side which I understood was to be treated of especially here. The point is this: What the actor gives is not a complete thing; he suggests merely what the auditor or spectator completes. I believe that in nine cases out of ten the auditor supplies 50 per cent. of the imagination, of the thought, the feeling and the various activities of the faculties that are produced when the play is going on. As an illustration of this—for an illustration seems rather necessary to prove that—I remember how years ago a very famous actor went on in a part requiring great pathos. He had the rôle to play of a very pathetic speaker. He gave it so completely, with such complete surrender, that he broke down, his voice was mournful and full of sobs, and he was hardly able to stagger off the stage; and everybody laughed. I went to him and said: "When you go on next time, simply suggest that; we know what the motive is; simply suggest it and let us do the rest." He did as directed and went through it with intended coldness and callousness, giving the words and just the suggestion of the feeling; and the audience was broken down with sobs and tears—showing a very decided fact, that in that case the audience wanted to supply the feeling and emotion, but were not allowed to do so in the first case because it was all accomplished for them, which they resented.

In this whole matter, whether we call it educative, dynamic, or whatsoever words you may use, the important thing, I believe, I am right in saying—not being learned as an educator, perhaps—but I believe that it is the feeling we are after today. It isn't merely cramming the mind with facts, but arousing the feeling of the pupil. Now, in what way, in what place, can it be done so thoroughly, what school is it in which it can be accomplished so thoroughly, as in the theater? It seems to me that the word "dramatic" simply means a new synonym for life; that there are a great many functions at which, if you ladies and gentlemen with scientific minds would look into them, I believe you would be amazed: how the great majority of actors, being exceedingly illiterate, having no breeding or education, in a very few years have a learning and scholarship, superior at times to that of people who have been through college, in certain branches, in matters of history, in matters of literature even, and in various other studies. They learn wonderfully quickly, like children, by short-cuts; and I believe in this whole educational problem there are short-cuts. They have been

forced to learn as children learn. I recall at this moment being away where there was a professor in Brown University, a friend of mine, a professor of Greek—I won't say how many years ago, because you might recognize him—who was consul at Athens. I called to see him, and he was out. There came to the door a young girl who talked nothing but what they called Greek, and I was nonplused. I thought I knew something of Greek; I had been taught it in college; but it was all "Greek" to me. A little girl, the consul's child, very young, able to speak only certain phrases, came toddling along and asked me in a childish way what I wanted, and I spoke to her in English. I told her I wanted to see so and so, and she turned to the girl and spoke to her in Greek—had quite a lengthy conversation in Greek; and then she came back to me and translated what she said. I spoke to the father later, and he said: "I have been a student of Greek all my life, and this child has been a few months in this country, and she is able to talk Greek and translate it to me." This means there is a method of learning which the child gets which by the college process we do not get.

Speaking of Greek, I remember that I was a very bad Greek scholar; my degree coming very near suffering for it; and when I was called on not very long after to put on a Greek play at Vassar, in getting at the sentiment, the modes, and characterization of that play, I found, when I faced the cast for the first time, that I was prompting them in Greek, that I was speaking to them in Greek words, using Greek explanations; that the language to me was a live thing which I understood for the first time; and I never had understood it during the four years when I was in college.

Now, there are ways of learning, and the actor has those ways, and I believe other artists find those ways; and I only wish there could be founded for this work of the theater a dramatic science as well as a dramatic art.

I am afraid I am running over the time. I want to say only a very few words more. It seems to me that the greatest study, the greatest book of all, is the book of life; and that is so much ignored. I believe that a great deal of the so-called scholarship is a mistake. It has no living value to us; we cannot use it, and it never ought to be taken up unless it has a valuation—practical use in our lives that we can put it to. The actor learns and the artist learns to study from life, to go out and study life, to study the character—all the faculties of human nature, all their manifestations, and so on; he learns a great deal more, and a great deal more quickly, than by the so-called academic method. I believe that literature should be and can be taught in that way. There again I am out of my field. But I cannot see why literature and all that is taught in rhetoric and grammar cannot be acquired through life-study in the theater. There is a peculiar thing which is not recognized. We know very well that there has been a revolution from the old mediaeval style to the development of the individual power, in studying individual temperament and character. In the theater a great deal that is causing some of the prejudice, and statements that have been made in regard to the drama today, can be answered by this peculiar fact: we have passed through, or we have partially passed through, a period, but we have hardly outgrown the mediaeval period. All remember, not many years ago, when the so-called stock companies were purely labor guilds, and when the whole process

of production and plan of workmanship were by pure authority, not by the study of the individual needs or abilities. That exists today to a certain extent, and is partly the cause of any weakness that may exist in our work. But, on the other hand, we are passing now rapidly out of that, and realizing that it is the development of the individual that is the great thing in the stage as well as in every other thing. And there is such a thing as education in the theater and for the actor. The ideal drama, of course, is in a very mixed state. We have all styles: we have the old-school actor brought up in the old mediaeval way; we have the modern actor brought up in an original way; and we have all styles mixed up in every way that we see. We don't know what it is that annoys us, but it is probable they are like a mixture of colors that do not harmonize.

I think this poor thing which is generally spoken of in that way, the poor child called the drama, cannot be treated in the old-fashioned way by spanking, by being sent into the corner as a poor, miserable thing that has to exist, but will have the honor of the attention and thought of your learned scientists.

PROFESSOR CHARLES H. MOORE, HARVARD UNIVERSITY

I have had no opportunity to read Mrs. Unger's paper in advance of this meeting. Moreover, your secretary invited me to present, if I saw fit, a separate and independent paper upon the general topic of this session; and this is what I have prepared to do. In the following remarks I have in mind the arts of architecture, sculpture, and painting primarily; but the case is with them the same as with music and the drama—which have just been more particularly considered.

Whether the fine arts have any power for good must depend on the spirit in which they are practiced, and the ideals they embody. The fine arts are mainly addressed to the feelings and the imagination. Their primary function is not to teach, but to give pleasure, and the kind of pleasure they may give will correspond with the motives by which they are inspired, and the feelings with which they are regarded. It follows that the influence of the fine arts may be evil as well as good, and thus whether they tend to advance or to retard the well-being of society will depend on their quality.

But the fine arts are not so much a moving force as a result of moving forces, since they are necessarily the expression of the moral and spiritual conditions under which they are produced. Therefore it is with these conditions that we need to concern ourselves primarily. Where people have artistic aptitudes, have reached a high plane of moral, intellectual, and civil life, and keep their higher interests dominant, they naturally produce noble art. Where such conditions are wanting noble art is impossible, and such arts as may be produced will have no good effect. The important question is, then, not so much how to utilize the fine arts, as how to make possible their existence in their best forms, and how to bring about in society capacity for their enjoyment—how to make people responsive to the appeal of noble art. The utility of the fine arts will take care of itself under right conditions.

With all that is admirable in our civilization, we yet appear to be far from realizing such conditions, and we shall not accomplish much for the good of society through the agency of art until we shall have laid a better foundation.

We are going too fast in attempts to popularize the fine arts for the benefit of society. We are in danger of encouraging the acceptance of specious and spurious art instead of that which is genuine. Our present activity in lecturing, in the placing of works of art in schools, in the multiplication of schools of design and museums of art, is largely ineffectual for good because it lacks discrimination, and overlooks the need for preliminary efforts to prepare the way for right artistic feeling. This activity does not enough regard the motives by which the arts are inspired. It proceeds too much on the notion that any kind of artistic interest will be salutary.

I believe that only good art can be of use to society, and good art is that which is inspired by wholesome conditions and high ideals. Therefore, as I have said, the way to make the fine arts useful to society is first to bring about conditions out of which good art can come. In advance of this all efforts to encourage and to popularize the arts will be futile as to results in the popular well-being. In advance of this the people cannot know what good art is. The present bewildering confusion of thought as to what is best in art is due primarily to the fact that this principle is not enough recognized and made the basis of judgment. It will be well, then, briefly to consider by what means it may be possible to do something to bring about the requisite conditions.

Without enlarging on obvious truisms as to the primary necessity for right motives, and right conduct of life, as the only basis of human action, and the only means of opening the mind to good influences of any kind, I may say that in my opinion one of the first steps toward better conditions must consist in the inculcation of a keener sense of public and private seemliness in our surroundings. So long as the approaches to our cities and towns are made unsightly by the dumping of refuse, by squalid settlements, and by a slatternly condition of grounds about manufacturing establishments; so long as offensive advertisements are flaunted from the walls of houses, and along entire lines of railways; and so long as streets are lined with pretentious buildings in jangling discord of numberless irrational travesties of architectural design, there can be little hope for much popular appreciation of the meaning and the worth of beauty, or for sterling artistic production. The state of mind which makes these things possible is incompatible with that to which noble art appeals. Eyes habituated to such sights, and feelings blunted by indifference to their deformity, must be incapable of responding to the influences of good art. Few of us escape the deadening influence of the appalling sights that thus disgrace our civilization.

A second step toward the creation of better conditions should consist, I think, in the cultivation of the sense of beauty by observation of the beauty of nature, and of good works of art where such works are accessible. The discrimination necessary to distinguish what is best will come through observation and comparison, if we study in a right spirit; for, though the best in art and in nature assumes a great variety of forms, it is one in essential character, and that character becomes discernible through the habitual effort to distinguish between good and bad.

Nothing conduces so effectively to this culture as the practice of drawing, if it be steadily directed to this end. I would therefore make drawing, not for its utility for mechanical or industrial ends, or with a view to any kind of artistic production, but as an aid to the apprehension of beauty, a very consider-

able part of the school training of youth. And I think we ought to regard any school programme as seriously defective which does not include this most humanizing exercise.

A further prerequisite for conditions favorable to the existence of art from which salutary influence can proceed is a constant and unqualified aspiration for excellence. All good art is based on good craftsmanship in best materials—on fitness for use and endurance in architecture, and on best possible carving, and drawing and painting, in the plastic and graphic arts. Without such conditions it is impossible for a people to produce any fine art worthy of the name, and only in so far as they can be made to prevail will it be possible for the best art to have any salutary social influence. Mere contact with even the noblest art counts for little where a people's engrossing interests lie in other directions, as is abundantly shown at the present time in those European countries which have the richest inheritance in noble works of art.

The great obstacle to a general prevalence of the finer influences of art among us, and the chief cause of popular indifference to the unsightliness of our surroundings, lie in our excessive material ambitions and activities. People always succeed best in those things for which they care most. If we consider what the great American people at present care most for, we shall hardly find that it is for those things which make for an appreciation of the worth of beauty. It is very clear, on every hand, that mechanical, commercial, and even scientific ends, with a primary view to material profit, and material comfort and convenience, are what now mainly animate our activities to a degree that is incompatible with openness to the finer influences of beauty. Whatever aspirations for better things there may be are, with the great majority of people, so subordinated to these material interests that they have no appreciable effect on the prevailing trend of thought and feeling.

The aspect of every thriving American city affords abundant confirmation of this. Consider, for instance, the appalling aspect of the city of New York at the present moment, as one views it in passing through the East River. Yet New York is our chief artistic center. She has her great Central Park, she spends many millions of dollars on ornate public and private buildings, she has a great Museum of the Fine Arts, and contributes largely to the support of music and the drama. But for how little good do these things count in the general make-up of the metropolis—which as a whole is hideous beyond any power of words to describe! There never was before in the world a great city of such appalling aspect.

I would not draw an exaggerated picture, and I take no pessimistic view. I believe that things are coming out right in the end. Nor would I imply that no signs of better things are discernible, that no excellence of achievement is manifest in contemporaneous art, or that no good influence now goes forth from this art. Much less would I deny that fine aptitudes for artistic enjoyment and artistic production are latent in the modern world and in the American people. But I would call attention to the fact that artistic aspirations, artistic ability, and the good influences on society which they should exert, are heavily handicapped by present conditions. And it is this state of things, it seems to me, that should deeply concern the American Sociological Society, and every modern community.